

THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE



**Senator
Mike Haridopolos**
*Florida Senate
District 26*



**Representative
Will Weatherford**
*House of Representatives
District 61*

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Bipartisan Legislation Expanding Lifeline & Protecting Consumer Choice Passes Senate & Heads to Governor for Signature

Tallahassee, Fla. – Legislation introduced by Senator Mike Haridopolos (R-Melbourne) and Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel) and hailed by consumer groups today passed the full Senate with a bipartisan approval and will now head to Governor Charlie Crist for his signature. CS/CS/SB 2626, known as the “Consumer Choice & Protection Act,” will provide a more balanced and competitive environment for Florida’s landline telecommunications customers, cuts in half the rate increase allowance that has been in Florida law since 1995 and expands Lifeline to more than an additional half-million Floridians.

“I thank my colleagues in the Senate and House for coming together on this legislation in an effort to help our most vulnerable Floridians,” said Senator Haridopolos. “This legislation, brought forward by Representative Weatherford and myself, was a bipartisan effort that will change a decade-old provision. By opening up the marketplace to allow providers the opportunity to bring more choice and better services and prices to their customers, Floridians win.”

“I would also like to thank Governor Crist for being open to this legislation, and I hope he will sign this bill for the benefit of our state’s consumers and Lifeline participants,” said Senator Haridopolos.

“I thank my House and Senate colleagues for recognizing that times have changed and that there is a real need for change in our state’s telecommunications industry,” said Representative Weatherford. “This legislation is the right change for the seniors and families in our state, and I am optimistic that Governor Crist will sign this legislation into law.”

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Specifically, CS/CS/SB 2626 will eliminate government red tape, expand Lifeline eligibility from 135 percent to 150 percent of the poverty level, cut the rate cap on nonbasic service in half to 10 percent and redefine the current definition of basic and nonbasic service, while continuing the existing price regulation for services that move to the nonbasic service category.

Senator Haridopolos represents District 26, which includes parts of Osceola, Brevard, Indian River and St. Lucie Counties. Senator Haridopolos is a college professor who was first elected to the Florida Senate in 2003 and subsequently re-elected. He currently serves as the chairman of the Policy and Steering Committee on Governmental Operations and Governmental Oversight and Accountability. Prior to his election to the Florida Senate, Senator Haridopolos served in the Florida House of Representatives from 2000-2003.

Representative Will Weatherford represents District 61, which includes parts of Pasco and Hillsborough Counties. Representative Weatherford is a businessman who was first elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2006 and subsequently re-elected. He currently serves as the chairman of the State & Community Colleges & Workforce Appropriations Committee.

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